TOK – Star Trek – The Next Generation – “Measure of a Man”

Was there a particular way of knowing that was most important in the decision about whether Data was the property of Starfleet? If so or if not, tell us why and how?

After watch "The Measure of a Man", it is the episode of the television series Star Trek: The Next Generation and I will going to discuss was there a particular way of knowing that was most important in the decision about data was the property of Starfleet. My answer is there is not a particular way of knowing that was most important in the decision about whether Data was the property of Starfleet, all four way of knowing taking an important part in this decision making and I will backup my statement in this essay.

One ways of knowing used by Commander Riker was sense perception. He used it to prove that Data was the property of Starfleet; Data was a machine and not a human. He proves this by told Data to bend a very strong metal, which was absolutely impossible for human to bend it. But, Data can bend it very easily. This suggests his strength was far stronger than human, consequently, that Data was not a human, it was a machine and it cannot have the rights. Also Commander Riker used sense perception in another way, when he taken off Data’s arm. This should be a very painful and difficult process for human; however, Riker separated his arm simply and Data do not felt any pain. Furthermore, you can see from his arm, it was obviously not a human arm, it do not have any blood and many iron pipes under the skin. This confirms that Data was not a human by common sense realism, what we see is what is there. Although perception cannot give us certainty, if the evidence of our senses is consistent with what reason and intuition tell us, it can still provide a good foundation for reliable knowledge.

Captain Picard used reason to show that Data is a sentient being with the choice to resign from Starfleet and to refuse to undergo Maddox's procedures. Maddox have three criteria use to define sentient life, intelligent, self-aware and consciousness. Picard points out that Data meets two of the three criteria. He says Data is intelligent, because he has the ability to learn and understand. He proves Data is self-aware by asking Data what you doing now; Data answer the question by use the word “my right”, “my position”, “my option” and “my life” to show he is self-aware. Then Picard asks anyone in the court to show a means of measuring consciousness. With no one able to answer this, Louvois acknowledges that neither she nor anyone else can measure this in Data (nor in any other person present), as such, Data, as a matter of law, is a sentient being. She therefore rules that Data has the right to choose. Captain Picard use deduction reasoning to work out data is a sentient life; it is a form of reasoning that moves from a general to a particular example: all sentient life is intelligent, self-aware and consciousness, then Data is intelligent, self-aware and consciousness, so Data is a sentient life. This type of reason was more certain but less informative. Used reason as one ways of knowing give us a logical sense to solving problems and questioning reality.

Many characters in the episode used Language as one ways of knowing. Maddox used language when after the hearing, Data tells Maddox that his research remains intriguing to him and offers to help Maddox understand his workings better after Maddox has had more time to study and perfect his techniques. Maddox said: “he is remarkable.” then Louvois said: “you didn’t call him ‘it’.” The change of the word reflected the change of Maddox’s thought, the word “it” usually used for non-living thing, and “he” used for living thing, this change directly show Maddox change his thought from it is a machine to he is a human, he admitted the rights of Data . This suggests language can reflect personal reality. Other example is Commander Riker, he using language very intentionally, when he asked Data what are you, data answer an android, then he asked what is an android, data give a accurate answer in dictionary, he highlight the words “automaton”, “made”, and asked made by whom. He was purposely lending data to answer he is made by human. Also he asked data what is capacity of your memory and how fast to you access the information. Riker used language as a tool to dehumanized Data, he emphasize Data is a robot and it is made by human. In addition, only computer have digital memory and rate to access the information. Language as a powerful tool to communicated, a bridge attach to different culture background and a way to express yourself.

Captain Picard used emotion as one ways of knowing when he wanted to backup the statement data is a human. He asked data why you kept the metals? He said he is vanity, then he asked why you kept the gift I give to you? He said he is value it; it is reminded of friendship and service. Final he asked why did you only kept Tasha’s portrait? He answer we are intimate. Vanity, cherish, friendship and intimate, these emotions are not a robot can feel, these emotions are for human. Emotion is a source of knowledge, which proves Data is a sentient life; he has the emotions that human have.

When we measure a people, we can’t make a decision on only one ways of knowing, we must combined the four ways of knowing, sense perception, reason, emotion and language. If we lose one of them, we lose part of truth and the answer may become a bias. These four ways of knowing give us a fundamental rule to explore and challenge the reality.